

Casper DGLISH

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English B41A

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### Indigo Reset

Florence Baker was dead. Or at least, he should have been. It wasn't unheard of to survive a suicide attempt, but the problem was *he hadn't survived*. He wasn't in a hospital, which is certainly where he *would* be if he wasn't dead. He didn't think he was in heaven or hell either. There wasn't anyone else around, and he didn't feel particularly *good* or *bad*. He was just *there*.

He wasn't even sure he was in a real place. Not that he *could* be somewhere that didn't exist, but there was definitely something about the place that should have made his head spin but somehow *didn't*. He was standing on what felt like solid ground but looked like nothing. Not even blackness, just *nothing*. It wasn't as unsettling as it should have been. Every step landed him on solid footing, and he was surprised to find that this didn't surprise him at all.

Then, of course, there was the button.

He called it that, not because it actually existed as a part of a mechanical device like a computer's power button would, but because it was round and he had the feeling that he was supposed to press it. That in itself was odd because the thing didn't really have a set location for him to press. It was really just a big circle of indigo - he was hesitant to call it light - that was constantly within his reach despite never actually appearing to move.

After walking around the not-place for some time (he couldn't tell you how much time or if time even existed there), he reached out a hand and lightly touched the button.

Florence was most certainly *not* dead. He wasn't exactly *alive* either, but at this point he didn't see how he could have died. He still existed, and he was currently in a rather elegant office of some sort. He didn't remember sitting down in the velvet chair, but he didn't remember *not* sitting down so he must have done so at some point. The door behind him opened, and he wasn't surprised at all to see an anthropomorphic deer in a business suit walk in and sit down across the desk from him.

"How do you do?" Florence found himself asking. That was odd; he had never greeted anyone like that before. Or maybe he *had*. After all, he had just said it without much thought, and you don't really say things without much thought unless you're used to saying them. In any case, the deer-man responded favorably and started speaking. Florence didn't understand a word he said, but agreed anyway. Time passed. Florence Baker was excused and went to open the indigo door.

Florence was trapped by bird-people. They kept him in a cage and kept trying to feed him birdseed despite him insisting that he wasn't a bird and thus didn't eat the same things birds did. They tried to give him different types of seed in hopes that he'd eat *something*. He appreciated the effort, but the birdseed simply *wasn't right* for him. Besides, he wasn't *not* hungry but he didn't seem to be getting any hungrier either.

It really didn't help that everything in the cage was the wrong color. At first, Florence had hoped that the deer-man would come in and fix it, but he never did. It was just the bird-people, and all they seemed to care about was getting Florence to eat the birdseed. Not that he could actually understand them when they chirped at him, but he was good enough at taking in gestures to safely assume what they meant.

One day, (he thought it was day, but he couldn't *really* be sure) they brought him an indigo worm. Florence Baker swallowed it whole.

He was sitting in a circle with a dog, two lizards, some sort of ferret, and a cat. One of the birds was there as well. They were all taking turns talking, but Florence could only understand bits of the conversation. Then they all looked at him, and the bird chirped encouragingly.

Florence forgot how to speak. He opened his mouth and nothing came out. His head buzzed like it was full of bees and someone screamed. The scream sounded both very close and very far away at the same time, and everything was indigo.

Florence was sitting across from the deer-man again. This time, however, a knife sat on the desk between them. The deer-man didn't seem bothered by the knife at all, occasionally picking it up and poking a paper with it. The deer-man made noises with his mouth, and Florence was vaguely aware of himself making mouth noises in return. At one point, the deer-man put the knife down and Florence couldn't stop looking at it. Sweat beaded on the back of his neck and crawled its way down his spine. The knife was indigo. Florence leaned forward and grabbed it.

He was in a new place. It was dark, but not the okay-dark of the first place. It was uncomfortable and far too small and it didn't have any color at all. He hadn't seen the deer-man in a while (or at least, it *seemed* like a while), but whenever he thought of him, an interesting metallic taste materialized on his tongue. Occasionally, birdseed would be slipped through a slot on his door, but he couldn't eat any of it.

There were maggots crawling under his skin, and they were itchy. Florence tried to squash them at first, but then he figured that he'd rather not have dead maggots as a part of his anatomy, so he started scratching instead. Surprisingly and unsurprisingly, the scratching didn't hurt at all. That was a shame. Florence hadn't felt anything but itchy for a while. He kept

scratching anyway. He didn't stop until he saw color. The first color was red, and that wasn't quite what he wanted, but he scratched a little more and was rewarded. Amidst the red that flowed out of his flesh, there were bright indigo maggots.

A person with a raven's skull for a head visited Florence one night. He knew it was night because the birds had stopped chirping. The maggots were all gone, but the birds wouldn't let him use his hands anymore. Maybe the skull raven would. Not that ravens *weren't* birds, but having a skull for a head was definitely not something the other birds did, so maybe this person would let Florence do things the other birds wouldn't.

The raven stepped closer to Florence and he tried to greet them but his mouth wouldn't make the sounds he wanted it to so he ended up screaming instead. The skull remained impassive and undisturbed. Florence was glad, he didn't like disturbing people. The skull raven had a bag. They pulled out a syringe full of indigo fluid and injected it into his veins.

Florence couldn't move. That was okay though; he didn't really *feel* like moving. A few bird-people came in and out of view every so often, and sometimes they chirped at him. He never knew what they were trying to say, so he never answered. Then one day, the deer-man came back (he was missing an eye, Florence noted). He looked at Florence and said something to the birds. Florence felt a prick, felt his entire being light up with indigo, and then felt nothing.

Florence awoke in a room with other people. He hadn't exactly been asleep, but he couldn't remember much about being awake either. Some of the people spoke to him, and he understood them and responded. The bird-people were watching them and seemed happy. Even the deer-man was standing in a corner of the room with a small smile on his face. Florence smiled too.

He was playing checkers with someone, and he was losing. That was okay. Florence didn't care much for winning, but he knew that others *did*, so he played with them and lost. He didn't really care much for anything, but he did things because other people seemed to care for them. The birds and the deer-man liked it when he did things. Florence went to make his losing move, and his piece was indigo.

Florence Baker had been away from the deer-man and the birds for a few months now. He knew it was months because a calendar told him so. He was still doing things because other people seemed to care for them. But one day, a snake showed up on his bed and told him that he didn't have to do that anymore. The snake knew what Florence wanted and would happily let him do something for himself. Florence said "okay," and the snake tied itself in a knot.

Florence Baker picked up the indigo noose.